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HUSBANDS AS HOMEMAKERS

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Not long ago, a stereotype butt of humor in cartoons and movies was a man in an apron, washing dishes or running a vacuum cleaner. Have times changed? Have American men adopted new ways of thinking and acting as far as their responsibilities in marriage and in the running of the house are concerned? What impact has the strong trend of married women entering the labor force had upon the man of the house?

This is a national study about the American husband--his involvement in the day-to-day functions of daily living--grocery shopping and cooking, cleaning and household chores, budgeting and paying the bills. Are some husbands more involved than others in "nesting and nurturing"? Who are they and what motivates them? From a marketer's viewpoint, how large a segment of American husbands is actively engaged in product selection at the supermarket and use of these products at home?

We will examine the American husband's household chore involvement with particular emphasis on grocery shopping. Let us take a look at husbands as homemakers.

We interviewed a national probability sample of 1000 married men in November-December, 1979. The study was conducted by mail through Home Testing Institute.

Here is an overview of the American husband's role in household chores:

. For the vast majority, the supermarket is a familiar scene. Eight out of ten go grocery shopping.

. A surprising seven out of ten ever cook.

. Two out of five prepare a complete meal all by themselves.

. And quite a few husbands help out in the mundane housekeeping chores--vacuuming, washing dishes, making beds and doing the laundry.

Table 1

The male of the species is easy to sight in the supermarket. But what is he doing there?

The majority of husbands--63%--are called upon to run down to the supermarket to do fill-in shopping while about half participate in major grocery shopping. One out of three husbands makes a major shopping trip three or more times a month.

Table 2

When he is on a major shopping trip, the husband is usually with his wife. But when he does fill-in shopping, he's on his own.

Table 3

Typically, when couples do a major shopping, they carry along a shopping list which, in the majority of families, was prepared by the wife alone. But in about one out of four homes the husband helps to prepare the list.

Table 4

We asked husbands what they actually did in the store the last time they went shopping with their wives. In one out of ten cases, the wife did all the shopping. In six out of ten, the wife did most of the shopping and the husband chose a few items. A sizeable minority--one out of four husbands--did about half the shopping.

When making their choices, wives consulted their husbands to some degree. One in four did so on most items they bought. However, in most instances, the husband was the silent partner being consulted on only some of the choices.

Table 5

Overall, the majority of husbands feel that their wives are better shoppers than they are but those who shop frequently feel more competent than other husbands. Only a minority of husbands who shop resent the time it takes away from the golf course and only a minority, one in four, hates shopping. The frequent shopper not only feels capable, he doesn't mind doing it.

Table 6

While the majority of husbands are consulted by their wives on only some or a few items, about half the husbands always or usually watch the newspaper for store specials and use coupons. It appears that, when consulted, they want to be informed. Moreover, in one in four households, the man of the house keeps a running list of things they need.

The frequent major shopper is much more likely to do all these things.

Table 7

The majority of husbands are aware of changes in prices at the supermarket and over half watch for the lowest possible prices. The frequent shopper is much more apt to shop for specials in food.

Table 8

In selecting brands, typically, the man of the house buys brands his wife tells him to buy or those he knows she likes. Two out of five husbands use unit price information to select the most economical brands, and a like proportion compare labels to decide on brands. Only one in four always or usually compares labels to select the most nutritious food.

Table 9

The traditional view of husbands as impulse buyers is outmoded. Only a minority like to pick out a few treats their wives wouldn't normally buy or look for new and different products. Fewer than one in five describe themselves as impulse buyers and only a handful like to buy imported and gourmet products from time to time.

Table 10

It is at the check-out counter that the husband really comes into his own. About half always or usually make it their business to watch the price register at the check-out counter.

Table 11

While not making many choices in the supermarket, husbands are conscious of and attend to messages concerning groceries. A majority say they use newspaper ads and store circulars as a source of grocery shopping information.

TV commercials and magazine ads are also noticed and friends or neighbors are occasionally talked to. The two sources of information used most often by them are newspaper ads and store circulars.

Table 12

Who are the husbands who shop? We find that they are in all income and age groups. Those who participate in major shopping trips also are represented in all income groups. The older the husband the more likely he is to go often to the supermarket for a major shopping. But even among the youngest age groups, about one in four husbands is in the supermarket for major shopping three or more times a month.

When his wife works full-time, the man of the house is somewhat more likely to shop than if his wife is employed part-time or if she is not working. An analysis of the shopping habits of these husbands--use of coupons, maintaining a shopping list, shopping for specials, brand selection--shows they are no different from other husbands. In keeping with the finding that more older men shop than do their junior counterparts, it is husbands in smaller households who tend to do major shopping more frequently. Note, however, that these demographic differences are slight in helping to understand why some men are more active in grocery shopping than others.

Table 13

The pivotal factors that bring some husbands into the supermarket more frequently than others are:

. whether or not they cook--among husbands who cook, 85% shop at the supermarket. This is particularly true for the man who participates in major shopping frequently.

. whether or not they prepare complete meals--9 out of 10 husbands who ever prepare a complete meal for the family shop.

. whether or not they share other housekeeping chores--92% of husbands who do a variety of household tasks that are traditionally considered the domain of the wife are shoppers as well. Over half of these "homemakers" participate in major grocery shopping very frequently.

Table 14

What motivates these husbands to take on more responsibility around the house? We studied a wide range of attitudes and by means of a special statistical analysis (step-wise discriminant function analysis) determined that the frequent shopper supports the views that:

1. "The best way of life is when both husband and wife share equally in taking care of their home and children."

2. "When his wife works a husband should take more responsibility around the house."

3. "It is not up to the wife to do all the cooking and the husband should be involved in such activities as helping to plan the menu when people are coming over."

Let us see how these attitudes reflect in behavior. Half the husbands in the U.S. ever help out in meal preparation, preparing one or more of the dishes that make up the meal and it is not just taking responsibility for barbecuing the meat. Two out of five husbands ever prepare a complete meal without someone else's help.

Cooking is not a sometime thing. One in three husbands help in preparing a meal at least once a week. One in five prepares a complete meal by himself this often, with one in ten doing so three times a week or more often.

Table 15

Half of the men who prepare complete meals cooked dinner the last time they cooked, while one-third prepared breakfast.

Table 16

Dinner was not prepared for themselves alone--sixty-five percent prepared it for three or more people. Breakfast and lunch were a one-or-two person meal.

Table 17

Men who cook are in all income groups. More of the younger husbands cook and they cook more often than older men. A special statistical analysis of attitudes revealed that the underlying motivation for cooking is simply that these men really enjoy doing it.

A husband whose wife is employed full-time is more likely to cook and prepare a complete meal at least once a week than are those whose wives work part-time or are not currently employed. The size of the family is not a significant factor in getting husbands to the range.

Table 18

When not cooking, some husbands are helping around the house in other ways. Taking out the garbage is the man of the house's primary household task assignment. Almost half vacuum most or some of the time and two out of five wash the dishes. One in three makes beds and loads the washing machine, while one in four cleans the bathroom, dusts and dries dishes. Husbands leave the cleaning of the refrigerator and the oven to their mates.

Table 19

One out of four husbands is a "heavy" participant in these tasks: comparatively, this group does more household chores more often than other husbands. They are from all income and age groups, with slightly more of the relatively newly married under 30 husbands participating than is true of their older counterparts.

When a wife works full-time, her husband tends to take on household tasks to a greater extent than other men. Fathers of larger families do less around the house than other husbands. It should be noted that the husband who does many household chores is not exclusively the same man who cooks frequently (30% vs. 22% of all husbands). A special statistical analysis of attitudes shows that his underlying motivation is that the husband's

role is one of sharing responsibility equally with his wife in taking care of the house.

Table 20

In the traditional family, the man of the house controlled the finances. Today, only one out of four husbands is responsible for paying the monthly bills. In half the families, the wife is in charge of this task while in about one in four families, husbands and wives share the job. This pattern cuts across all age and income groups and is true whether the wife works or does not.

Table 21

To sum up, this study reveals that the traditional male/female roles pervade the home and the supermarket. Grocery shopping for the majority of married couples is the province of the wife. There is a sizeable segment of husbands, however, one out of four, who take equal responsibility with their wives when they do major grocery shopping together. Attitudinally, the majority of husbands feel that their wives are the better shoppers. And when they do shop, husbands have their wives' brand choices clearly in mind. They have their wallets in mind as well, being aware of price changes, looking for deals and specials, watching the price register at the check-out counter. Husbands who shop come in all income brackets and ages. When wives work full-time, their husbands participate in major shopping to a slightly greater extent than others. But the factors that bring some husbands into the supermarket more frequently are cooking and sharing responsibility for household chores.

Involvement in cooking is frequent for some husbands--one-third of the husbands help out in preparing a meal at least once a week. And one in five prepares complete meals this frequently. Younger husbands cook more often than others. And there is a tendency for husbands of full-time working wives to cook often as well as help out around the house on other routine chores.

In the majority of marriages, the task of paying the monthly bills falls to the lady of the house. This occurs in all age and income groups and in households where women work as well as when they are not employed.

The picture that emerges is that a sizeable minority of husbands throughout the country are taking more responsibility around the house. For the majority, however, the apron strings have not been tied behind their backs. The working status of women has not had thunderous impact yet on their husbands' traditional role at home. In this study, there are strong indications that it is the husbands of full-time working women who are the most likely to share in the running and ordering of the household. All forecasts are that there will be a steady increase in the number of women who work full-time. We predict, therefore, that what is now a small nucleus of homemaking husbands will grow into a significant segment, demanding the attention of marketers. More and more, the American husband will be wondering, as he moves through the supermarket aisles, "What should I serve for dinner tonight?"

TABLES

TABLE 1

HUSBANDS' PARTICIPATION
IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES

All Husbands	1093 %
Ever do grocery shopping	77
Ever cook	70
Prepare complete meals	44
Vacuum	47
Wash dishes	41
Make beds	37
Do laundry	33

TABLE 2

HUSBANDS' INVOLVEMENT
IN GROCERY SHOPPING

All Husbands	1093 %
Ever do grocery shopping	77
Do major shopping	56
Major shop 3+ times a month	32
Usually major shop alone	13
Do fill-in shopping	63

TABLE 3

DO HUSBANDS SHOP
WITH THEIR WIVES OR ALONE?

	Total	Husbands Who Do: Major Shopping	Husbands Who Do: Fill-In Shopping
	612	689	
	%	%	
Usually do this type of grocery shopping:			
With wife		77	28
Alone		19	68
With children		4	5
With other adult		1	1

TABLE 4

USE OF A SHOPPING LIST

Did Last Shopping Trip with Wife	364 %
Used a list...	71
Prepared by:	
Wife alone	44
Both	26
Husband alone	1

TABLE 5

WHAT HUSBANDS DO IN THE STORE WHEN SHOPPING WITH THEIR WIVES

	Did Last Shopping Trip with Wife 364 %
Shopping:	
My wife did all the shopping	10
My wife did most of the shopping; I picked out a few items	60
My wife did about half the shopping; I did the other half	23
I did most of the shopping; my wife picked up a few items	3
I did all the shopping	*
No answer	4
Consulting:	
Husband and wife consulted:	
On most items	26
On some items	38
On a few items	26
On none	7
No answer	3

*Less than ½ of 1%

TABLE 6

OVERALL ATTITUDES
TOWARD SHOPPING

Husbands	Ever Shop	Often Do Major Shopping
	839	349
	%	%
My wife is a better shopper than I am	69	57
I feel I am very competent at selecting foods to buy	63	72
I have better ways to spend my time than in grocery shopping	39	22
I very much dislike grocery shopping	26	14

TABLE 7

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Husbands	Ever Shop 839 %	Often Do Major Shopping 349 %
I use the coupons we get (mail or newspaper)	48	56
I watch newspaper for store specials	46	61
I keep a running list of things we need	25	43

TABLE 8

SHOPPING FOR PRICE

Husbands	Ever Shop 839 %	Often Do Major Shopping 349 %
I notice when there is a change in price of products I buy regularly	60	73
I watch for the lowest possible prices	55	57
I shop for specials in food	46	56

TABLE 9

SELECTING BRANDS

Husbands	Ever Shop 839 %	Often Do Major Shopping 349 %
I buy brands my wife tells me to buy or I know she likes	73	75
I use unit price information to select most economical brand	44	49
I compare labels to decide which brand to buy	39	44
I compare labels to select the most nutritious food	24	26

TABLE 10

IMPULSE BUYING

Husbands	Ever Shop	Often Do Major Shopping
	839	349
	%	%
I like to pick out a few treats my wife wouldn't normally buy	29	28
I look for new and different products	19	25
I am apt to be an impulse buyer	18	14
I like to buy imported and gourmet products from time to time	7	6

TABLE 11

CHECK-OUT

Husbands	Ever Shop	Often Do Major Shopping
	839	349
	%	%
I make it my business to watch the price register at the check-out counter	54	59

MEDIA USED FOR
GROCERY SHOPPING INFORMATION

Husbands Who Shop	Ever Use 839 %	Use Very Often 839 %
Sources used for grocery shopping information:		
Newspaper ads	74	34
Store announcements or circulars	72	28
Television ads	55	4
Friends or neighbors	52	3
Magazine ads	46	3

TABLE 13

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF HUSBANDS WHO SHOP

100%=Total in each segment	Ever Shop	Do Major Shopping	
		Ever	Often
All Husbands	77%	56%	32%
Income			
Under $10,000	78	59	35
$10,000 - $14,999	74	54	30
$15,000 - $19,999	77	59	33
$20,000 and over	77	55	31
Age			
Under 30	77	57	25
30 - 39	80	53	23
40 - 49	76	47	29
50 - 59	75	57	32
60 and over	77	64	45
Wife's Work Status			
Employed full-time	83	63	35
Employed part-time	75	52	29
Not currently employed	76	56	33
Family Size			
2 persons	79	60	37
3 persons	76	56	35
4 persons	74	49	21
5 or more	75	54	26

TABLE 14

SHOPPING RELATED TO COOKING AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD TASKS

100%=Total in each segment	Ever Shop	Do Major Shopping	
		Ever	Often
All Husbands	77%	56%	32%
Ever cook	85	64	43
Ever prepare complete meals	90	69	43
Do many household tasks	92	75	52

HUSBANDS' PARTICIPATION IN COOKING

All Husbands	1093 %
Help in meal preparation	52
Barbecue only	18
Other help	34
Prepare complete meals	44
Prepare complete meals once a week or more often	22
Once or twice a week	12
3 or more times a week	10

TABLE 16

WHAT MEALS DO HUSBANDS PREPARE?

Ever Prepare A Complete Meal	486
	%
Last meal prepared was:	
Dinner	51
Breakfast	36
Lunch	12
Not stated	13

TABLE 17

NUMBER OF PEOPLE FOR WHOM
THE LAST MEAL WAS PREPARED

Ever Prepare A Complete Meal	Last Prepared: Dinner	Breakfast	Lunch
	221	155	50
	%	%	%
Number of people for whom meal was prepared:			
One person	5	16	28
Two	40	41	44
Three	18	18	8
Four	21	14	8
Five or more	16	11	12

TABLE 18

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF HUSBANDS WHO COOK

100%=Total in each segment	Ever Cook	One or More Meals Per Week
All Husbands	70%	22%
Income		
Under $10,000	68	21
$10,000 - $14,999	76	27
$15,000 - $19,999	71	22
$20,000 and over	68	22
Age		
Under 30	81	28
30 - 39	79	29
40 - 49	68	21
50 - 59	70	19
60 and over	58	18
Wife's Work Status		
Employed full-time	79	34
Employed part-time	69	21
Not currently employed	69	17
Family Size		
2 persons	71	24
3 persons	69	25
4 persons	70	21
5 or more	68	18

TABLE 19

HUSBANDS' SHARE IN
HOUSEHOLD TASKS

All Husbands	1093
	%
Most or some of the time:	
Take out garbage	80
Vacuum	47
Wash dishes	41
Make beds	37
Load washing machine	33
Clean bathroom	27
Dust	23
Dry dishes	23
Sort laundry	21
Clean refrigerator	16
Clean oven	14

DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF HUSBANDS WHO ARE HEAVY PARTICIPANTS IN HOUSEHOLD TASKS

100%=Total
in each segment

	All Husbands	Heavy Participation
		26%
Income		
Under $10,000		21
$10,000 - $14,999		29
$15,000 - $19,999		29
$20,000 and over		26
Age		
Under 30		30
30 - 39		27
40 - 49		24
50 - 59		27
60 and over		24
Wife's Work Status		
Employed full-time		38
Employed part-time		28
Not currently employed		20
Family Size		
2 persons		30
3 persons		22
4 persons		27
5 or more		18

TABLE 21

WHO PAYS THE MONTHLY BILLS?

All Husbands	1039
	%
Monthly bills are paid by:	
Wife	50
Husband	25
Both	23
No report	2